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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 1 December 2006 from the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and has the honour to state that on the expiry of its one-year term, India has decided to present its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for a three-year term, at elections to be held in New York in 2007. This information was conveyed to the Secretariat on 6 October 2006. In this connection, the Permanent Mission of India further has the honour to enclose a copy of the voluntary pledges and commitments by India for the information of the Secretariat (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 1 December 2006 from the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Voluntary pledges and commitments by India

India is seeking re-election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held at the UN General Assembly in New York in May 2007.

India has a long tradition of promoting and protecting human rights. It was privileged to be in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid since even before India's independence. India's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights flows from the realization that in a truly pluralistic society, the growth and well being of citizens can only be guaranteed through a culture of protection and promotion of human rights.

The Indian Constitution enshrines India's commitment to human rights by guaranteeing to its citizens fundamental political and civil rights. Special provisions for the progressive realization and enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights have also been provided for constitutionally. India has taken an important initiative for the empowerment of women by reserving one-third of all seats for women in urban and local self-government, thus bringing over one million women at the grassroots level into political decision making. With the launch of the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme on February 1, 2006, the right to work has been operationalized in India. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act enacted by the Indian Parliament in 2005 provides immediate and emergency relief to women in situations of domestic violence. Reflective of India's commitment to eliminate child labour, a ban on employment of children under-14 years as domestic help or at eateries came into force in India with effect from 10 October 2006.

The independent and impartial Indian judiciary has delivered far-reaching pronouncements on the protection and promotion of human rights. Far-reaching measures taken by the Supreme Court of India include Public Interest Litigation, by which the Supreme Court can be moved by any individual or group of persons highlighting the question of public importance for invoking this jurisdiction. The Supreme Court of India has recognized the justiciability of some economic and social rights as an extension of the Right to Life. The National Human Rights Commission, a powerful and independent body, monitors human rights developments in India and shares its experience and expertise with its counterparts in other countries. The free and independent media in India plays a crucial role in promoting respect for and monitoring of human rights. Civil society in India is among the most vibrant anywhere the world.

India is a committed supporter of the UN human rights system and the promotion and protection of human rights is ingrained in its domestic and foreign policy. It has been active in deliberations on human rights in international fora and in the development of widely accepted international norms. India is a large, democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural society, whose continued presence on the Human Rights Council would bring a perspective of straddling all divides of pluralism, moderation and balance from a country that has consistently demonstrated in practice its commitment to human rights and

fundamental freedoms. Against this backdrop, India voluntary makes the following pledges and commitments:

- India will abide by its national mechanisms and procedures to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.
- India will maintain the independence, autonomy as well as genuine powers of investigation of national human rights bodies, including the National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women, National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Backward Classes, as mandated by Indian constitution and laws.
- India will foster a culture of transparency, openness and accountability in the functioning of the Government, as enacted in the Right to Information Act.
- India will continue to encourage efforts by civil society seeking to protect and promote human rights.
- India will continue to work towards the progressive realization of the right to work.
- India will expand the implementation of its Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, which provides for 100 days of assured employment annually to every rural household in the country.
- India will continue to promote the social, economic and political empowerment of women in India by affirmative actions, gender mainstreaming in national planning, gender budgeting and formation of women self-help groups. India will work towards elimination of discrimination and violence against women through legislative measures as well as effective implementation of existing policies.
- A National Commission for the Protection of Child's Rights would be set up for the speedy trial of offences against children or of violation of child's rights.
- India will work to make the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.
- India will engage constructively in the evolution of modalities and mandates of the Human Rights Council, and in the reform of the UN human rights machinery.
- India will participate actively in the work of the Human Rights Council in norm-setting in the field of human rights.
- India will participate constructively in developing modalities for universal periodic review by the Human Rights Council and in reviewing and strengthening the system of Special Procedures and other expert mechanisms of the Council.
- India will continue to support the Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, including through regular voluntary contributions.

- India will strive for the full realisation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.
- India will continue to support UN bodies such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UN Democracy Fund, etc., that have a role in contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights.
- India will work with UN Member States and relevant UN bodies for reform of the UN treaty-body system.
- India will work for the world-wide promotion and protection of human rights, based on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue.
- India will cooperate with States, upon request, in their implementation of human rights obligations through capacity building by way of technical cooperation, human rights dialogues and exchange of experts.
- India will continue to actively support domestic and international processes that seek to advance empowerment of women and women's rights and gender equality.
- India will continue to actively support domestic and international processes that advance the rights of the child.
- India will work for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the Copenhagen Declaration and Plan of Action, and the outcomes of other major UN international conferences.
- India will continue to support efforts directed at the adoption of a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- India will support the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly.